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AN ENGLISH VIEW OF THE CIVIL WAR.

VI.

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THE LAST volume of this most interesting series of papers begins with an account of the attack upon and defence of Charleston. Were I bound to select out of all four volumes the set of papers which appears of most importance at the present moment, not only from an American, but also from a European, point of view, I should certainly name those which describe the operations at Charleston.

All European powers, England especially, are deeply interested in this question of naval attack *versus* land defence. Since the time of the Civil War many changes have, no doubt, taken place; many inventions have been made which greatly affect the relations between ships and forts. The size of guns has enormously increased. Torpedo work in all its forms has been immensely developed, and the use of the electric light has materially helped all night operations. Ramming has been taken more and more into account in the construction of all men-of-war. Various forms of armored ships have come into existence and have been subjected to all such experiments as peace admits. It is never very safe, however, to assume that anything will take place in war precisely as the result of peace trials would lead one to believe. It would be no good reason, however, for refusing to adopt new plans or novel inventions in our next war because they have not been tried and found to answer well in some former one. To act upon such a principle would be to handicap very heavily the nation that adopts it. It would be to hand over many great advantages to a more courageous, a more intelligent, and a more enterprising enemy. But it is only possible safely and usefully to apply the results of peace experiments to war preparations by

studying as closely as we can the experience with which past wars supply us. Now, since the great Civil War in America came to an end, there has been no contest in which, on anything like the same scale, many of the points which the efforts to take Charleston illustrated have been tested by actual fighting. It is interesting to summarize the facts as they appear in these papers. We have ample evidence both from the side of the defence and of the attack. Practically there is no important difference in the conclusions to which the serial papers lead us.

If there was in the whole of the South one fortified harbor which the government of the Union was anxious to seize, that harbor was Charleston. The whole resources of the Federal dockyards—it may be fairly added, of the outside world also—the inventive genius of the most inventive people upon earth, and especially of the most able constructors, were unstintingly employed in preparing an armada for the attack which it was intended should be irresistible. The ablest naval officers who could be found were placed in command. In only one respect can it be considered that the attack was deficient. It was not possible to spare for the coöperating army more than a relatively small military force. Practically, therefore, the success of the attack depended on the fleet, increased to the fullest strength, being able to reduce the land defences. During four years of war, despite all these efforts, Charleston held out, and it only fell at last because the advance of General Sherman's army and the common progress of the war necessitated the withdrawal of the garrison.

Nor is it possible to consider that these records represent at the present time only "ancient history." We in England have lately had much discussion on the relations between land defences and the employment of fleets. Almost all our arguments are taken from the time of Nelson, or from even earlier days. No one who looks into the matter can fail to see that at least these records of the Civil War represent facts much more closely analogous to the present relations between fleets and land batteries than any other operations of the kind in previous wars. Many of the details of the story add greatly to its interest and value. General Beauregard, the successful defender of the place, is able to show that in many respects the defence was under serious disadvantages. He speaks of the "inadequate force under him" (page 4), whilst it was the boast of the Secretary of

the Federal Navy that the preparations of the North by sea were of a kind "such as the hand of man had never yet put afloat." (Page 5.) The result of the first attack was wholly unexpected. "The repulse had not been looked upon as a thing possible by the North," and the news of the failure "engendered a heavy gloom of disappointment and discouragement." The Admiral was, of course, sacrificed by the Navy Department. He, however, like many other unjustly-used commanders, might securely trust that time would bring its revenge. The evidence of all those whose judgment can weigh with posterity tends to blast the reputation of the men who, by suppressing reports and perverting facts, continued to make it appear that the fault lay with the navy and its commanders.

As Admiral Rodgers says, not only had Admiral Du Pont been selected because of his well-founded reputation, but the commander of every turret ship and of the "Ironsides" was a man of known and approved skill and courage. None of these doubted the necessity for Admiral Du Pont's retirement from the unsuccessful attack. All of them consider that he was unjustly dealt with; and that the simple cause of the failure lay in the fact "that, whatever degree of impenetrability" the ships might have, they possessed "no corresponding quality of destructiveness as against forts." It is the serious duty of all our officers of the sister service to consider these experiences. If history has any value as a guide to the fighting of the future, it goes to prove how dangerous it will be to all naval officers if by any action of theirs they create a false public opinion as to the relative powers of ships and guns. If, as it would seem some of them wish to do, they succeed in making the public think that one gun afloat is worth several ashore, it is they who will have to make good that claim by success, when they are asked to attack heavily-armed and well-planned coast batteries.

The estimate in America at the time of the attack upon Charleston was altogether different; and most certainly the engines of war which have been invented since those days do not tend to redress the balance which during the Civil War told against the Federal Navy. The practice from guns fired from a floating target can never be reliable, and most certainly not as reliable as the practice from guns ashore. None but a fanatic on the subject will deny this, and the experience we gained by the

bombardment of Alexandria in 1882 proves this conclusively. Our firing on that occasion may, I think, be fairly described as erratic, although the conditions as to sea and weather were most favorable, and the enemy's return fire was extremely feeble—indeed, beneath contempt.

The one success which attended the naval attack upon Charleston is at least as significant as the general failure. The attack upon the Confederate batteries on Morris Island, which paved the way for the bombardment of Fort Sumter, was successful precisely when the fleet and army were able to combine in the attack, and because they did so combine. If this story be compared with that of Admiral Farragut's great success at New Orleans, when he passed the forts below that city, it will be seen that there was nothing in those events which tends to affect the force of the lesson taught by the attack on Charleston. As mentioned when discussing the capture of New Orleans in a former article, Admiral Farragut's success was mainly due to the moral effect produced by his gallant passage of the forts. Ship against fort, and gun for gun, he never reduced those forts, and seems to have inflicted very little damage upon them. Again, taking the whole story of the operations on the Mississippi together, it is clear that, while it was vitally important to the success of the Federal military operations throughout the vast theatre of war that the Federal, and not the Confederate, navy should dominate the waters of that great river, the result could not be secured by the navy alone. It was General Grant's reduction of Vicksburg and his capture of the other forts on the Mississippi which converted that river into the exclusively Federal highway that cleft the Confederacy in two. This coöperating action of the naval and military services, mutually supporting each other, and the fact that neither can be neglected without direct detriment to the other, seem to be among the most important lessons taught in the whole history of the American Civil War. Those lessons are of world-wide interest. I do not think they are affected by the story of Admiral Farragut's brilliant success at Mobile Bay, into the details of which I must not allow myself to enter, as it was, practically, almost purely an affair of ships against ships.

Before leaving the subject I may venture, however, to express the admiration which all unprejudiced readers of these papers must feel for the skill and judgment with which General Beaure-

gard conducted the defence of Charleston. It may be gathered from his article that he agrees in thinking that when forts are fairly pitted against fleets the general officer in command on shore ought to consider that he has a task before him which, with brave men under him, he ought successfully to accomplish. And, further, that, as a rule, the naval commander intrusted with the attack of a well-fortified harbor will evince a prudent wisdom if he arranges for the coöperation of such a land force as will clear away some of the opposition with which his ships, if alone, would have almost insuperable difficulties in dealing. Our own expedition to Kertch, during the Crimean War, supplies the very experience which is wanting to complete the lesson taught by the attack on Charleston. At Kertch it was possible for a land expedition, supported by the full power of the navy, to gain just those advantages which are illustrated by the successful second attack upon Morris Island. As the result of our combined attack on Kertch, the navy secured a passage through the Straits of Yenikale, which they could not have obtained for themselves, or without the coöperation of the land force that had advanced upon Kertch. On the other hand, the army could not have acted without the assistance of the navy, both in securing a point for landing and in the direct support obtained from the guns of the fleet during the disembarkation. The success of this combined operation opened out the Sea of Azof to our gunboats, which, to use Mr. Kinglake's graphic phrase, "carried the invasion into the very heart of the Czar's dominions, and produced a material and moral effect almost equal to all that was achieved by the terrible sufferings and fierce struggles before Sebastopol."

The one thing, as General Beauregard has well pointed out, which he could not have resisted would have been a well-appointed and powerful Federal army, that would have coöperated with the Federal navy in an attack upon his works on James Island. The lessons as to the power which lies in the combined action of army and navy, and as to the importance, at least for the purposes of local defence, of a certain number of coast batteries, cannot be ignored. It would be, however, a great injustice to one of the best soldiers, most skilled engineers, and ablest strategists who fought in the Civil War, were it not to be freely admitted that the defence owed much of its memorable success to the genius of General Beauregard, the Todleben of Charleston.

Through the scenes still to be enacted before the war was brought to an end, we enter now directly upon an examination of what must always be regarded as the "last act" of this great human drama. In this study, it is interesting and instructive to compare General Grant's own account of the preparation for "The Campaigns of 1864" with General Sherman's paper on "The Grand Strategy of the Last Year of the War." Again and again in the course of the great struggle between Grant and Lee one is struck by the relative disadvantage of the position occupied by the Confederate leader in one important respect. The "grand strategy" of which General Sherman speaks covered the whole field of war, and General Grant took upon himself the immediate supervision of the most important of all the operations upon which the several Federal armies were employed. General Sherman's Atlanta campaign and Butler's movements on the south of the James River were as much under his general direction as General Meade's Army of the Potomac. On the other hand, Lee does not seem to have had any actual control over the movements of the Confederate forces that did not belong strictly to his own army. One naturally somewhat hesitates to accept evidence which is given by other generals who coöperated with Lee, since we have had no corresponding evidence from himself. It has always struck me, however, that in some respects even Lee's very greatness made his position tend to at least one unfortunate result. Lee was so great, not only in character, in genius, and in reputation, but in the affections of the whole Confederacy, civil and military, that, if he was not to be the commander-in-chief of all the armies of the Confederacy and to direct and control their movements, no one else could effectually take that place. The importance of this fact comes out perhaps most clearly in the period after Cold Harbor, and in General Beauregard's evidence as to the proposals he made at Richmond, of which I shall have more to say presently.

The military student must not forget that Lee was not at the focus of information in regard to the general course of the war outside his own immediate field of operations; that he had no responsibility with regard to it, and could not take upon himself to act from moment to moment throughout the whole theatre of war, as General Grant did on his side. Whilst this was the case, no one in Richmond, on the other hand, liked to act in any

decisive matter without consulting Lee. This seems to have given rise to a certain headlessness which, I think, is to be observed in the conduct of the Confederate authorities, civil and military, during this year of the war. It does not appear that this headlessness can be reckoned as the fault of any one particular man in Richmond. This fact could be illustrated by incident after incident throughout this volume, and those who read these pages with care will see for themselves what is meant. The majority will probably agree to some extent with what is said here, both as to the fact and as to the cause of it. The enormous superiority in the mechanical means of intercommunication throughout the States under the Federal Government made that possible for Grant which was not possible for Lee. All must agree with General Sherman that Grant's great merit as a commander was the ability and clearness of vision with which he grasped the whole of the situation. He saw not only the position of vantage in which he stood, but the fact that it was well worth while, and that it would be an economy of life in the long run, for the Union to pour out life and treasure unstintingly; that by so doing he must in the end wear out the Confederacy. Surely the Union owes its life to having found the man who was ready and able so to direct its overwhelming resources.

Whilst fully recognizing General Grant's clearness of perception and his boundless pluck and determination, it seems to me that, when the actual campaign from the Wilderness to Cold Harbor is closely and critically examined, few impartial educated soldiers will deny that throughout it Lee simply and completely outgeneralled his great opponent. To judge, as I must do, from these papers, it would seem that many very able Northern soldiers concur in this opinion. Which shall we take as the fairest summary of the feelings of the Northern army on this point? Major-General McMahon states :

"The men could not help reading and discussing certain facts. Two years before, this same army had been placed much nearer Richmond with comparatively little loss. During Grant's advance from the Rapidan he had the advantage, of which he freely availed himself, of ordering troops to his assistance, not begging for them as McClellan did in vain. He depleted the defences of Washington at his pleasure, and of new troops more than the number of men with which he commenced the campaign joined him before its termination at Appomattox. The line of the peninsula and the advance to Cold Harbor and the Chickahominy had been McClellan's second plan. His first had been a movement from Urbana, with the possibility in view of crossing to the south side of the James and compelling the evacuation of Richmond and its defences. This plan had been overruled in Washington, and that of the

peninsula, also suggested by McClellan, had been approved as a compromise. But the plan of an overland march to Richmond, while protected navigable waters within our control led to the very door, was fully tried between the 3d of May and the 15th of June and had failed." (Page 220.)

Then, again, let us turn to the briefer summary by Major-General Smith. It is more technical in its language, but it is, fully as much as the other, supported by a detailed examination of the conduct of the campaign. He writes, at page 230: "In speaking of a concentration much better than the one which was made by the Army of the Potomac, Jomini says: 'The logistics were contemptible.'"

Turn now to the other side, and see what was the feeling of the Southern army regarding each battle of the campaign. See how the evidence given us proves that at the Wilderness Lee had exactly anticipated the very point where Grant would cross the Rapidan. (General Law, page 118). See how, taking advantage of the very movement he had anticipated, Lee flung his army upon the flank of the crossing enemy in such a direction that a part of Meade's army, had the whole operation been worked out as he intended, must have been cut off from the remainder, and driven into the river or the Wilderness in a condition of complete disorganization, if not to utter destruction. But the operation was not worked out as he intended. No; the course of the battle repeated incidents with which we are now familiar. General Longstreet's wing, arriving in magnificent order, was just a sufficient number of hours too late to produce the decisive result which Lee had justly reckoned upon. If analogy has any value, it is tolerably safe to say that, had Jackson been in Longstreet's place then, Jackson's troops would have reached the field, not perhaps in the magnificent order which Longstreet had the art of imparting to his men, but exactly at the very hour when Lee expected them. Had Longstreet arrived in time, the Wilderness would have been, as an offensive stroke, as brilliantly successful as that of Cold Harbor was as a defensive one.

Probably the most severe risk which Grant ran throughout the campaign, and the most brilliant stroke which Lee had prepared, was at the passage of the North Anna River on May 24. Lee allowed both wings of Grant's army to cross the river unopposed. They were completely separated one from the other, for the centre had been successfully checked. Both wings were at Lee's mercy. But Lee was ill, too ill for action, and I think it may be

said that this illness, which confined him to his tent and rendered him incapable of action for the time being, in all probability saved Grant's army from a blow that would have postponed, at least for that campaign, the advance on Richmond. If that operation had been postponed, it is difficult to see how Butler's army could have escaped destruction. That great results have arisen, and that the very course of history has been on several occasions seriously influenced, through the illness of generals commanding in the field, is well known. It would, however, be difficult to find a more striking illustration of the fact than is here presented to us.

I think it would not be unfair to sum up as follows the story of this campaign: On May 3-4, 1864, soon after midnight, the Army of the Potomac moved out from its position north of the Rapidan, and prepared for the passage of that river at the very point where Lee, watching it, had fully anticipated it would cross, and where he wished that it should cross. General Lee had deliberately chosen as his battle-ground the very place where Grant's army was now about to arrive. He knew this tangled wilderness well, and appreciated fully the advantages which such a field afforded for concealing his great inferiority of force, and for neutralizing the superior strength of his antagonist. General Grant's bold movements across the lower fords into the Wilderness, in the execution of his plan to swing past the Confederate Army and to place himself between it and Richmond, offered Lee the expected opportunity to strike a blow upon his flank, while his troops were stretched out on a very long line of march. Undoubtedly Lee expected that Longstreet's corps would be up at daylight on the following morning, May 6, but in point of fact it was still at least two hours' march away. That delay gave the Federals time to commence the attack, and partly to intrench themselves on the ground where they had been attacked upon crossing. As a result, the losses were not materially different on the two sides, or, at least, the action was relatively indecisive.

Nevertheless, Grant was foiled in his first attempt and began his movement towards Spotsylvania, to march round Lee's right. He was again anticipated in this movement, and nothing very decisive happened until June 11, after the failure of the two Federal attacks on June 10. Lee then somewhat anticipated the moment at which Grant's fresh turning attempt actually began,

and the "Bloody Angle" on the 12th was the result. That was the only means, and it was but a partial success gained by the Federal general throughout the campaign. Despite the capture of 4,000 Confederates at this point, no impression could be made upon the interior lines. Grant again moved eastward, and for five days the two armies manœuvred, one against the other, with little fighting. On the 18th June a final attempt on Spotsylvania was terribly repulsed. On the 24th and 25th June occurred the incident of the North Anna, to which I have already alluded. For two days at least Grant's army was in as critical a position as such a force could well find itself in. Once more Grant slipped away, and once more he found his opponent facing him. This time the position on the Totopotomoy River was too strong to be assailed ; so he moved off towards Cold Harbor.

It is alleged on page 228, by General W. F. Smith, on the authority of General Meade's own statement, that Meade, annoyed by the credit which Grant was acquiring for a campaign which had been entirely worked out in its details by him, deliberately made no arrangements for the attack which Grant had ordered. Whether this be actually true or not, there can be no doubt from all the evidence that, from some cause or other, in the concentration of the Federal Army before Cold Harbor, and in the attack on Lee's position, the Federal Army was simply mismanaged and sent to useless butchery. Grant himself appears to admit the mistake made there. Nevertheless, it would be most unfair to assume that he was responsible for the disastrous details of that action. He throws the blame upon no one, and his silence on the subject is highly honorable to him. His method consisted, and wisely consisted, in a general superintendence of the whole campaign against the South, whilst he left the details to the several commanders of armies. He especially abstained from removing General Meade from the command of the Army of the Potomac. As it stands, General Smith's statement is a most appalling indictment of General Meade. It amounts to this : that, because the newspapers did not do him the justice to which he considered himself entitled as regards the movements of the army he personally commanded, he allowed that army to have a dire disaster inflicted upon it. The one merit of the campaign was the firmness and sternness with which it was carried on—elements which were imported into it entirely by Grant, and not by Meade. If General

Meade, from sheer, jealous sulkiness, did really allow the army under his command to be exposed to the awful slaughter it experienced at Cold Harbor, through lack of proper care and proper orders as to details, the crime was one for which no punishment, no condemnation, could be too severe.

It is quite true that by the end of the campaign Grant's doggedness had produced a certain effect upon the Confederate soldiery. All acknowledge it. But what was that effect? Undoubtedly they had begun to realize that, if the North would allow its soldiers to be exposed to such frightful butchery, the North might at that price triumph. But not for one moment did it modify the confidence of the Southern soldiery in their own great leader; and not even at the fatal moment of the surrender at Appomattox did a Southern soldier doubt that everything that any general could do for his army had been done by Lee. I fancy that if at Cold Harbor the proposal of the Irishman after the battle of the Boyne, "to swop leaders and fight it over again," could have been put to the two armies, there would not have been one hand on the Southern side held up to accept the offer. Would there have been none on the Northern? I fancy few of the Northern generals who knew all the circumstances would like much to put the question of the greatness of the two leaders to any such test. Of course, the opinion of armies is not always a fair one as to the capacity of generals. It is, however, a very important element in the actual power and effectiveness of a general in command. In this instance the opinion of the hour has been confirmed by the careful and critical examination of many able soldiers.

Meantime, while the Wilderness campaign had been proceeding, a very heavy blow had been struck against the South in the appointment of General Sheridan to the command of the Federal cavalry. Its organization as what is known in Europe as mounted infantry enabled the incomparably superior resources of the North in men, horses, and equipment to be developed with decisive effect. When, on the 9th May, 1864, at 6 A.M., Sheridan, with 10,000 horsemen, started on his Richmond raid, there was no force with Lee's army fitted to cope with him. Three days afterward the death of Stuart marked the end, at least as far as the Eastern campaigns were concerned, of the ascendancy of the Southern horsemen. For an army like Lee's,

already shortened in its supplies, this fact was of dire consequence.

It is interesting to compare the circumstances under which this raid was carried out with those which attended the cavalry raid under Stoneman. Both to some extent partook of that characteristic of all such movements, that "to take the enemy by surprise, and to penetrate his country, was easy enough; to withdraw from it was a more difficult matter." (Page 153, Vol. III.) In that respect General Sheridan had the important advantage which the position of Butler's army south of the James River gave him. He was thus provided with a secure point to make for, where he could obtain supplies and a safe starting-point for his return march. Stoneman, on the other hand, was launched simply against the enemy's communications without a force sufficient to draw the whole of Stuart's cavalry after him. He therefore left them behind him, to serve Jackson admirably at Chancellorsville at the very time that the Federals were deprived of Stoneman's services. On the other hand, from the first the purpose of Sheridan's move was even more to ease Meade's fears as to the safety of his wagon-trains during the passage of the Rapidan in presence of Stuart's cavalry than to harass the enemy by attacking his communications. The movement was so made as to encourage and employ Stuart's cavalry during the general advance of the army. "Circumstances," as usual, "alter cases," and the practical difference of these two cases is well worth the thoughtful study of soldiers. Stoneman's raid, whatever its destructive effects, was a dangerous withdrawal from the Northern army of its eyes and ears at the very moment when it most needed them. Sheridan's raid contributed essentially to the general objects of the march of the Northern army, by keeping the Southern cavalry fully engaged at a moment when they might have seriously hampered Grant's movements by attacking the enormous train which his lavishly-equipped army left stretching out behind it beyond the Rapidan.

Taking all other parts of the theatre of war into consideration, the balance of advantage this year, up to the date of Cold Harbor, was heavily in favor of the South. Sherman had certainly pressed Johnston toward Atlanta, but had gained no decisive advantage over him. Beauregard had heavily defeated Butler at Drewry's Bluff, and had, as General Grant happily expressed it,

sealed him up between the James and the Appomattox rivers as completely as if he were in a "bottle tightly corked." The unfortunate expedition to the Red River had come to an end before the Cold Harbor campaign was over, and had not improved the general situation. In the Shenandoah Valley for the moment the Northern forces were certainly advancing successfully, but the number of troops there was altogether small, and General Early had been already ordered to begin the movement which was to take him up to the walls of Washington.

WOLSELEY.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]